DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 036 258 HE 001 299

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TITLE PLANNING STUDENTS' ROLES IN EMERGING UNIVERSITIES.
INSTITUTION COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS IN THE U.S., WASHINGTON, D.C.
PUB DATE 5 DEC 69
NOTE 9P.; ADDRESS TO THE NINTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS IN THE U.S., WASHINGTON D.C., DEC 4-6, 1969

EDRS PRICE EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.55
DESCRIPTORS DECISION MAKING, EDUCATIONAL PLANNING, *GOVERNANCE, *GRADUATE STUDENTS, *HIGHER EDUCATION, *PLANNING, *STUDENT PARTICIPATION, STUDENT ROLE

ABSTRACT

AN IMAGINARY CONSULTANT (WITH SOME RESEMBLANCE TO THE AUTHOR), MAKES A SURVEY OF GRADUATE STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONS AND THEIR VIEWS OF THEIR DECISION-MAKING ROLES. THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY ARE INTENDED TO GUIDE DEANS OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS IN EMERGING INSTITUTIONS IN WORKING OUT SUITABLE ROLES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC DECISION MAKING. BASED ON THE FINDINGS, THE CONSULTANT MADE THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS: (1) CAREFULLY SELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF MODERN STUDENT GROUPS MAY BE MORE INFLUENTIAL IN MAKING CHANGES THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE GROUP. (2) SELECTING STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES IS A CRITICAL STEP. THOSE MOST ANXIOUS TO REPRESENT THEIR PEERS ARE NOT NECESSARILY THE ONES WHO WILL TAKE THE TIME AND ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARTICIPATING SUFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY. (3) AVOID PLANNING, INCLUDING LONG-RANGE PLANNING, FOR STUDENTS; PLAN WITH THEM. (4) DON'T BE SURPRISED TO FIND STUDENTS WHO WANT NEITHER THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE OVER, NOR THE RESPONSIBILITY OF RUNNING THE WHOLE UNIVERSITY. (AF)

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PLANNING STUDENTS' ROLES IN EMERGING UNIVERSITIES

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INTRODUCTION

During the academic year 1970-71, we may imagine, several graduate deans representing emerging universities--hereafter called emerging deans--decided to collaborate in the interest of introducing a fresh point of view. Their sense of urgency may have been related to the fact that all of these deans worked at universities in urban settings where the working out of suitable roles for graduate students in academic decision-making had been recognized as a problem--or should it be called an opportunity?--of unsurpassed importance.

Seeking a fresh point of view, these deans asked the Council of Graduate Schools for support in securing the services of an experienced consultant with unexcelled appreciation of education in general and the importance of graduate education in particular. He must be young in spirit, the deans said, yet older in knowledge and wisdom; he must be perceptive in the diagnosis of ailments in complex organizations, sensitive to the subtleties of inter-cultural relations, and competent in detecting the practical implications of emerging trends and styles of leadership. But he must not be another graduate dean, nor an ex-president even if he had established a consulting firm; for a fresh point of view, they wanted an outsider instead of anyone in education. With qualifications such as these in mind, the Council of Graduate Schools considered dozens of

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candidates and interviewed seven. Among these seven a recently retired member of the British diplomatic service was found. He was living in the United States where three of his grandchildren were enrolled in three different graduate schools. The fact was discovered that he had been reading faithfully The Chronical of Higher Education, had been following the feature articles on higher education in the Christian Science Monitor, had subscribed to College Management, had been making on his own initiative a special study of changes in graduate education and research. He was particularly interested in emerging universities because his three grandchildren were earning graduate degrees in such institutions. His diplomatic career had been crowded with various assignments in emerging nations where high priority had been assigned to the development of educational opportunities.

A twelve-month contract with Mr. Whately was negotiated by the Council on behalf of the emerging deans. The funds were provided by a most benevolent foundation.

(At this point comes the disclaimer. Before I disclose anything about how Mr. Whately approached his consulting assignment and then characterize his report, I must confess that Whately is not a pseudonym for Carter. Whately is the fictitious character. Although I was stationed in England and I admit to more than a dozen years of part-time consulting with an information systems company working under contracts with the Department of Defense, I have never been a diplomat. Nevertheless, the encouragement to imagine what Mr. Whately might do and say came from remembering the few diplomats I have met and the many diplomatic people I have been

privileged to work with.)

Mr. Whately started his consulting work in April, 1970, and submitted his report one year later; so it must be imaginary. How fresh his point of view turns out to be remains to be seen, but certainly we should not expect too much. We are not trying to imagine the counsel of a profit but only the viewpoint of an imported consultant.

The Consultant's Approach

Mr. Whately found himself unable to resist the temptation to compare emerging universities with emerging nations. In spite of the great and obvious differences, he thought about certain similarities between universities and nations as organizations. Both could be studied as cultural organizations, each containing sub-cultures engaged with one another in the making of evolutionary--occasionally revolutionary--changes. Although each of the various groups had established strong vested interests, the groups belonging to the older generation were labelled and treated by younger citizens as the establishment.

In both organizations, certain kinds of relationships among sub-cultural groups seemed to emerge invariably. One finds not only disadvantaged individuals but also claims and demands made in the name of disadvantaged groups. In spite of the fact that some of the individuals in these groups come from affluent backgrounds, they identify themselves with restless, vocal and occasionally militant minorities. Other individuals join forces with the moderate majority. Others exercise their independence.

Both minorities and majorities tend to emphasize the disadvantages of their relative status. It is the comparison and contrast of relative status which invariably occurs, so far as Mr. Whately knew. Thus he anticipated that groups of students, in searching for their own identities, would be found engaged in the process of trying to ascertain their status in relation to the status of others including administrators and faculty groups. He wondered about the extent to which the general pattern of establishing faculty power, through organizations such as the American Federation of Teachers, the A.A.U.P. and faculty senates, might be a pattern of history currently being replicated by student groups. Knowing that in a few instances graduate teaching assistants had unionized, that student senates and graduate student associations were becoming more active in power struggles, Mr. Whately was inclined to pursue the apparent similarity. In a larger context, it occurred to him that emerging universities--in search of their institutional identity--might be viewing themselves as relatively disadvantaged in comparison with the more established institutions. If status comparisons such as these <u>invariably</u> occur on all levels of organization in both emerging nations and emerging universities, then, Mr. Whately reasoned, those characteristics invariably found among inter-group relationships would provide a basis for determining current trends and forecasting the nature of future developments. Furthermore, any diplomat knows that estimating future developments on the basis of invariant relationships is much safer than estimating on the basis of variance. Predictability is a function of the level of abstraction, and the various happenings on various campuses at various times in various settings are more specific than predictable. Yet the discovery of <u>patterns</u>

of relationships among various happenings might well serve a basic need for planning students' roles.

We could not understand Mr. Whately's approach to his consulting assignment without knowing something else about his orientation. Being familiar with military intelligence, and having been deeply involved in diplomatic intelligence, Mr. Whately experienced an overwhelming curiosity concerning the amount and the presumed accuracy of information currently available about interrelationships among groups of people involved with one another in emerging universities. He wanted to find out what each of these groups had learned about themselves and about one another. Inasmuch as he was trying to estimate the future situation for planning purposes--which is comparable indeed to the missions of diplomatic intelligence--he prepared himself for a series of one-week visits to a dozen fairly typical emerging universities where he planned to interview at each institution a generous sample of graduate students, graduate faculty members, deans (including but not limited to graduate deans) and the president. He prepared a set of open-ended questions for everyone in his sample with primary emphasis on relationships between students and faculty. He formulated questions for graduate students concerning how they felt about the faculty, and he asked faculty members how they felt about graduate students. After making preliminary, on-the-spot comparisons between these two sets of responses, he asked administrators how they felt about the feelings of faculty and students toward each other. Such was the characteristic emphasis of his questioning. Even more important, Mr. Whately resolved to practice in his interviewing everything he had learned as an observer and listener. He aimed to be perceived as the exact opposite of a spy engaged

in espionage activities.

Mr. Whately's Report Characterized

Like the youngster in elementary school who reported to his parents that he had learned some things he did not want to know, Mr. Whately learned--in spite of his thoughtful preparation and his consummate skill in communication--that the kind of information he wanted most was most difficult to secure. On his first try, from nearly half of the respondents, his questions about feelings yielded some answers about thinking; his questions about particulars yielded some answers about generalities; his questions about qualities yielded some quantitative answers; his questions about groups and relationships among groups yielded not only some answers about stereotypes but also projections of blame such as, "we have made reasonable proposals, but they don't understand us."

Mostly from his sample of graduate students, Mr. Whately drew the conclusion that students in general and their elected leaders in particular were aware that administrators usually take the lead in extending student participation in academic decision-making more than the moderate student groups try to do and much more than the typical faculty senate does. Recognizing that the faculty is most resistant to extending student participation--especially resistant where students have only a voice or minority voting rights--the moderate students were fearful that no one was really listening to them. The faculty--with few exceptions--were perceived as preoccupied with consulting, researching and publishing instead of teaching and advising. A majority of the students felt that this is a trend which is running against

them; but a minority were hopeful that this trend is slowing down and possibly could be reversed, eventually, in some but not all of the emerging universities.

Mr. Whately reported that he was unable to find among the patterns of responses any area of academic decision-making in which the students felt nearly as incompetent as the faculty would have them believe they are. Students felt that the faculty perceives them as transients who are not yet educated; but students felt about themselves that they are a most important component in the academic community who are becoming educated. Students felt sure that no one else is in any position comparable to their own to evaluate teaching. The faculty evaluates student performance, and the students expressed the attitude that sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. It may be an extension of this attitude which encourages students to secure more power for themselves especially at the very point of the greatest struggle against the faculty, namely in the making of hiring, firing and tenure decisions. Influential student groups clearly expressed a lack of trust on the part of both administrators and faculty because both are perceived by students as not trusting students. This lack of mutual trust is a sign of inadequate communication--as well as a conflict of behavioral norms and deep-seated values. The achievement if not the restoration of mutual trust by means of communication and both the further extension and the refinement of opportunities for all groups to cooperate is fundamental and probably urgent.

Mostly by faculty respondents, Mr. Whately was reminded that over half of the 120 schools in the American Association of State Colleges and

Universities had made arrangements for students to serve on committees from which they were previously excluded. With distinctions drawn between having a voice and having a vote, faculty members reported that student representatives have been given opportunities to participate in the making of admissions policy; in the determination of curricula; in evaluating faculty performance; in decisions of hiring, firing or tenure; in selecting presidents or chancellors; and students have elected representatives to serve on boards of trustees. When Mr. Whately asked faculty members how they felt about these kinds of roles for students, he found a polarization of differences. A minority of those interviewed expressed themselves as if they were self-appointed champions of the students' presumed cause. More often than not, the cause was presumed for all graduate students as if a single category were sufficient. A majority of the faculty members interviewed apparently felt threatened by the expansion of student power as evidenced by resistance, by the formation of alliances and cliques, and by the relative frequency of compromises: the frequency of votes taken with narrow margins exceeded the frequency of consensus and subsequent collaboration. Nevertheless, the compromises did show signs of evolving from the exclusion of students toward more opportunities to participate. In most of the universities sampled, the students have already achieved self-determination in personal, social and extra-curricular affairs, and what remains in question is mostly extensions beyond these areas into academic affairs and governance.

When confronted with the differences between student and faculty groups, the emerging deans were neither greatly surprised nor completely cognizant. When Mr. Whately asked them about student-faculty relationships,

most of the deans expressed mixed feelings. In the mix, Mr. Whately found evidence of some anxiety, much frustration, a little resignation, and a preponderance of cautious optimism.

Included in Mr. Whately's report were some observations for consideration by emerging deans:

1. Carefully selected representatives of moderate student groups may be more influential in making changes than any other single group. One case in point is the radical change in curriculum which was spearheaded by students at Brown University.

2. Selecting student representatives is a critical step. Those most anxious to represent their peers are not necessarily the ones who will take the time and assume the responsibility of participating sufficiently and effectively. One approach to selection is a two-step operation: an appropriate, representative student organization nominates candidates for appointment by the dean or recommendation to the University Senate by its Committee on Committees.

3. A relatively neglected function for students is long-range academic planning. To be avoided at all cost is planning <u>for</u> students rather than <u>with</u> them. Planning <u>with</u> students in behalf of future students can foster communication, cooperation, and self-motivated learning; for the student's concern for relevance can have a salutary influence if the administrators and faculty do not try to use students, and thus alienate them, but treat them instead as human beings with a stake in their own destinies.

4. Don't be surprised to find students who want neither the opportunity to take over nor the responsibilities of running the whole show. Even if they did, they could not do so unless the other groups abdicate their own responsibilities.